

[FIFTH EDITION.]

PRICE }  
(ONE PENNY.)

{ 7s. 6d. per hundred  
{ for distribution

RESISTANCE TO CHURCH-RATES :

## A LETTER

TO

THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND.

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BY THE REV. I. E. N. MOLESWORTH,  
EDITOR OF THE PENNY SUNDAY READER.

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MEN, BRETHREN, AND FATHERS,

THOUGH not pretending to the gifts of Paul or Stephen, yet as a servant and ambassador of their gracious Lord, I address you by the affecting and grave appellations which they used<sup>1</sup>, and which relate to duties and feelings closely connected with our present subject—

MEN, BRETHREN, AND FATHERS—Hearken—inquire and deliberate, before you lend your voice to swell the cry of the infidel, the papist, the revolutionist—and before you lend your hand to cripple the power of that Established Church, which derives its commission and succession from Christ and his Apostles; and which, purified at the Reformation from Romish corruptions, has been the Protestant bulwark—a store-house of sacred literature and theological armour—an asylum of the persecuted, and an example of pure doctrine and sound morals, not only to this country, but to all Europe. Surely, Christians of whatever denomination, and however they may differ in minor points, will not deny that the Word of God is read, and that much of

<sup>1</sup> Acts vii. 2; xxii. 1.

the religious knowledge and principle diffused over the country, is planted and cherished in the Churches of the Establishment. For, to these purposes they are *for ever* appropriated. For these public uses only, they are held by the clergy, in their corporate capacity. *They cannot be turned again to secular purposes.* They are not built on speculation, and, if that fail, capable of being used or sold by the builder, for a theatre, or an assembly-room. I do not put this as a sneer, or a reproach, to dissenters; but merely to state one general distinction between the places of worship of the Establishment, and those of dissent, which, independently of all other considerations, entitles them to the national support. They are offerings of public or private piety and munificence to the nation, and upon *the virtual trust* of being *for ever* set apart and maintained for the national religion. To keep up such buildings, is only fulfilling the tacit understanding on which they were built; and even contributions from the public revenue to effect this, or meet the increased necessities of the country, if required, would be nothing more than what is due from all professing Christians, and to that manifestation of *national* care, for the honour and favour of God, and for the morals and religious principles of his subjects, which a truly Protestant state cannot consistently disclaim. I do feel assured that (whatever mere *political* dissenters, papists, agitators, and revolutionists, may, upon *their principles*, not unreasonably consider it *their duty* to do), the *seriously religious* dissenter, and still more, the *professed churchman*, must have been deceived, by some gross prejudice, by some specious fallacies, before he can have been led to league himself in this unhallowed alliance, against a Christian, and an essentially Protestant, Church. I will now, therefore, state the avowed claims of the Association against Church-rates, and the chief positions which they put forth as neither to be assailed nor doubted, and on

which they seek to raise a confederation, and general clamour, to accomplish their object.

Of the fallacies alluded to, the four following are the chief:—

I. They call the Church-rate, which is, in fact, a rent-charge, a *tax*.

II. They assert, that not only the dissenters ought not, directly, to pay this rent-charge, but that the State itself may not, **FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE, COMPROMISE THIS MATTER, NOR EVEN COMMUTE THIS RENT CHARGE FOR A PAYMENT OUT OF ITS GENERAL REVENUE TO REPAIR ITS NATIONAL CHURCHES;** *because* the dissenters, and others, who must, in some direct or indirect way, contribute to this revenue, have places of worship of their own to keep up, and *receive, as they say, no advantage* from these Churches.

III. That it is putting a burthen on their *consciences*, either to make them pay directly, or for the State to furnish the means of keeping up the Churches of an establishment which they dissent from.

IV. They refer to certain documents, which, they would persuade us, prove that in this country, a certain proportion of the tithes, at some remote and unknown period, were set apart for this purpose, and, therefore, that it is an unlawful claim on the people, and that the present law should be construed or restored according to this imaginary ancient custom.

I. They call it a tax. Well! you will say, what is the harm of that? I will tell you.

1. Everybody knows the prejudice and unpopularity of the very word, tax. It is calculated to raise in your minds a feeling, which will incline you to judge in the argument unfavourably to the Church, and favourably to its enemies, who are advocating the abolition of the rate.

2. Those, who do not consider deeply, may be led,

by the very name of tax, to think that it is an enactment made since the dissenters separated from the Church, and charged upon the *persons* of dissenters.

Therefore, I beg to tell them, and you, that Church-rates are *not a tax*, and that to call them a *tax*, is a miserable trick, tending to deceive the people, and to mislead their judgments, by appealing to their prejudices. Church-rates are not a tax charged upon the *persons* of dissenters, but a *rent charge* on property, “older by *centuries* than the title of *any estate* on which it falls.” They are a *rent-charge*, subject to which, every proprietor or occupier, whether dissenter or churchman, and his forefathers, before dissent, as now constituted, was heard of, purchased, inherited, or rented property, as the case might be, and *according* to which, he *calculated* his purchase money or his rent. If the Church-rates had been called into action *after* the appearance of dissent, and imposed on them *specially* as dissenters, or with a *view* to depress them, and exalt the Church, then they might have had reason to complain, and to call it a tax. But when it was apportioned (from *remote antiquity*, and before dissent was in being) by the *whole* nation, for *national* edifices of religious worship, it would be only demanding a premium upon dissent from that worship, to require either a special exemption in their favour, or even a general confiscation for their pleasure. The real object of the revolutionary abolitionists is, to induce a *Christian* nation to overturn an establishment for teaching Christian Doctrines, and rob its religious edifices of their ancient means of support. But before they can do this, they must deceive the people, and persuade them, that it is a *personal* tax contrary to their national liberties.

II. If I am right in my first position about the *rent-charge*, there is an end also of the second assertion of the abolitionists—that the dissenters ought neither to pay Church-rates, nor to let the State commute them ;

because, forsooth, they tell us they (the dissenters) get no advantage from our Churches. For, if it be not a tax, but a *rent-charge*, I leave you to judge what his principles must be, who refuses to pay either to a body, or to individuals, that which belongeth to them, *before* he possessed the property, merely because he *gets no advantage* from it. The question is, not whether he *gets advantage* by paying, but whether, as a conscientious man, (to say nothing of the *religious* purposes to which it is applied,) he ought to resist a charge, subject to which, he took his property. But, to show the real weight of this supposed truism, that no man is to be taxed for that from which he *gets no advantage*, and of which he, perhaps, disapproves, let us suppose, for the *sake of the argument*, that Church-rates really were a *tax*. Would this principle be a sound one? I deny it, and, I trust, can disprove it. I deny that *taxes* are either unjust or impolitic, because they are applied to objects from which *some individuals* derive no profit, or which they even disapprove. I deny that the revenues of the State ought to be withheld from *public objects*, on account of the dissent and dislike of *certain individuals*. The legislature should look to the *general* benefit, not to *excepted* notions, caprices, and wants. For, if it were not so, *what* application of public money could be made from which more or fewer would not be found, who derived, or *fancied* they derived, no benefit, and who, consequently, according to the views of this Association, would have a claim to be exempted from payment, or to demand from the legislature an *abandonment* of the *object* itself? I say "*fancied*," for as far as the conduct of the individual is concerned, the argument might be used with just as much reason by him who *fancied* he had no advantage, as by him who really had none. Only *carry out* this principle. Let us show a few examples of its application to practice, and its absurdity will be glaring.

Let certain Christians (we know the case has occurred) take up the tenet that it is *sinful* to go to law. Let these men build a common hall, in which they would meet to settle any disputes among themselves,—might they not, on the same principle as the abolitionists, claim that no part of the State resources should go to the payment of *courts of justice*, or *judges*, or *prisons*, &c., because *they neither derive advantage* from them, nor *conscientiously approve* of them, and *have to repair their own court-house*? Might not the republican, by the same rule, complain that national justice and his civil rights were invaded, by the state paying, *against his will*, for the maintenance of *the King*, his palaces, his ministers, &c.? Might not the *smuggler* with equal justice, complain of the outrage upon natural equity, that the State, to which he in various ways is taxed, should appropriate any part of its revenues to keeping revenue cruisers, and a host of preventive guards, from which he not only *derives no advantage*, but most *cordially disapproves*; while he is also compelled to keep up *his own watchers and fighters*, and *his luggers and cutters*, and while, moreover, he is a most zealous and practical advocate for the *advantages of free trade*? Thus, you might show its absurdity in ten thousand instances. It is evident that the *general* advantage, not that of *this* or *that* body, or individual, who may choose to make *exceptions*, must be the principle on which the revenue of the State must be applied. If the opposite principle were adopted, it would be at once a premium upon dissent from every measure of government, and would tend, not to the prosperity and union of society, but to its misery and dissolution. And if the *general* good of the State be a legitimate object, I affirm that the good conferred by the Church is of the *highest and most important character*, that the support of her public worship is an essential part of the polity of a Christian nation; and that the means at her disposal *bring forth fruit* to the State, of the *excellence*

and *abundance* of which, no parallel can be found in the returns of any part of the national expenditure. There may be some hardy enough to deny this ; but I assert it, relying upon the echo which that assertion will find in the bosom of almost every candid and religious-minded man. For, I feel assured, none such (though he may prefer his own mode of worship) can for a moment doubt, that the nation must derive inestimable benefits, from the appropriation of these sacred edifices to the service of Almighty God—from the Gospel of Christ continually read and preached there—from the weekly assemblage of rich and poor—from the ministrations of an highly educated, and, I will say, pious and exemplary, body of Clergy—and from all the various religious, charitable, peaceful, and pure feelings, cherished by the Sabbath services of ten thousand parish Churches. The man that can lay his hand upon his heart, and, before God, say, “MY COUNTRY DERIVES NO ADVANTAGE FROM THESE”—that man’s intellect must be of a strange mould, or his prejudices must have acquired a most dangerous power.

Nay, more,—I contend that the plea of the dissenter not deriving any advantage, is fallacious. Not only the nation at large, but *every individual* receives benefit from the Church, be his creed what it may. Herein I claim the candid admission of the *religious* dissenter, carefully and justly distinguished from those political and factious agitators, who use the name of dissent, and the plea of conscience, only as a stalking-horse of popery, infidelity, or revolution. I ask them, as sincere protestants—do you, HAVING FAITH IN THE ATONEMENT—INTERESTED IN THE VIRTUE AND SALVATION OF MAN—do you believe that even *your* cause has not benefited by the *zeal*, the *learning*, the *organization*, the religious and moral influence of our Church ? Do you, as Christians, not recognise her at least, as a *fellow labourer*, and a most efficient

one in the vineyard of Christ? Will you assert that you—nay, will you assert that even the political foe, the very infidel,—that any man whatsoever, *can* be so *dissociated* from the community, as not to be benefited by the honesty, the purity, the order, the regard for the sanctity of truth, and all those virtues which are essential to the stability of society, and which the reading of the Word of God, the prayers and the preaching of the established Church, must diffuse and cherish? I will put the reply to these questions not in my own words, but in the words of *religious* dissenters themselves.

"If it be lawful to institute Christianity, it is lawful to perpetuate it. Because there is a decayed beam in the roof, is it necessary to pull the beam down, when it can be removed, and a sound one substituted? It is much better to heal, if possible, a diseased limb, than at once to amputate: and I call upon the advocates for church annihilation to point out an equal substitute for it. With anything less than its utter destruction I am fully persuaded that neither Popery nor infidelity will be satisfied, and I implore my brethren to keep an equal distance from them both; they stand not in need of their assistance to advance and carry their claims. The people of God have but one common interest; many a holy devoted minister in the Establishment is labouring to promote the glory of God in the salvation of souls; and it is but solemn mockery to bless God for their success, and to pray for its increase, while their hands are stretched out to unroof the building that covers them. If the Church be a field, the tares are not to be rooted up to the destruction of the wheat. Where there is one faithful holy minister of the Establishment, I would to God there were a hundred. Churchmen and Dissenters, we should all find enough to do. Because my fellow-shopman gets more custom at his counter than I do at mine, that's no reason that I should quarrel with him, so that the master gets the profits.

\* \* \* \* \*

"There are thousands and tens of thousands of holy devoted people in the Establishment, and who there received their first impressions, many of whom would be deprived of those means if the churches of the Establishment were swept away: and I again repeat, that to sweep them away is the great object to be obtained by the combined operations of infidelity and Popery."—*Letter of D. Warr, Dissenting Minister of St. Leonard's, near Hastings.*

"We cannot, Sir, be silent spectators of the haughty and ambitious proceedings of the Dissenters generally, seeing, as we do, the Papists, the Deists, the Unitarians, and, we regret to add, many who call themselves Protestant Dissenters, all join in one common league against what they call our common enemy, and by which, by their conduct, they appear to mean the Established Church. We cannot but express the alarm we



feel, and, as Christians, enter our solemn protest against their presumptuous proceedings.

"We beg to assure your Majesty we dare not join with infidels, and those who deny the divinity of Christ, nor with those who acknowledge a foreign supremacy—no, nor with those who treat with contumely the doctrines of the Church of England, the leading articles of which we view to be in accordance with the Scriptures, which are the foundation of the Protestant faith."—*Petition of Protestant Dissenters of Jirch Chapel at Leeds*, 1835.

To these I will add the words of the Rev. Mr. Pickering, a Dissenting Minister, whose letter appeared in the *Standard* of November 26, 1836, while this was in the printer's hands.

"I am grieved to know that some of you have been lately told by a popular minister, from a pulpit in this parish, that it is your duty to resist the payment of this rate, notwithstanding the defeat in opposing the grant: such declaration, with others, equally opposed both to Scripture and every principle of good government, made me exclaim with some degree of horror, 'if this is dissent, I am no dissenter!' 'if this is reform, I am no reformer!' Though I am for the time being your pastor and teacher, in all spiritual things, I claim no right, nor would I make the least attempt to impose upon you any system of politics, not in accordance with your own convictions: I nevertheless feel it an incumbent duty, from the relation in which I stand to you, to point out the error to which you are now exposed, and to beg that you will listen to me, and weigh the force of my arguments on this subject, with the same dispassionate and respectful attention as you have heretofore paid to me on other points. Allow me then, dear brethren, to call your candid attention, in the first place, to the Apostle's declaration on this point. Rom. xiii. 1, 7.—'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God: who-ever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.'"

We now come to

III. The third plea, Conscience<sup>1</sup>. If the Church-rate be, as we have said, a *rent charge*, that must be a very *convenient* conscience which directs a man to pass

<sup>1</sup> In the remarks on the *play* of conscience, which are *ironical*, I beg to be understood as referring to those *only* who *knowingly* use it as a *pretence*, not to those who, under *erroneous notions*, really wish to act up to it. Who are the *pretenders* will be determined *not* by me, but by the common sense of the people comparing their *pretences* with their *practice*. I would not willingly hurt the feelings of any *well meaning* (though mistaken) individual, but I will fearlessly assail cant and imposture.

into his own pocket what belongs to another. But, again: suppose it a tax. Is it really a matter of *conscience* that the State under which you live, shall not apply its revenues to the maintenance of national places of worship, set apart to teach the Gospel of our common Lord, because you happen, in some minor point, (many do not know what point,) to differ from the National Church? Is your *hatred* and *intolerance* of this Church such, that your very *conscience* is afflicted, because the nation should keep up its *public edifices*? If you were in *Turkey* or *Persia*, would your *conscience* trouble you for paying the taxes, because the State directly, or indirectly, maintained the *mosques*? If you were at *Rome*, would your *conscience* make you resist the taxes, because part of them went to maintain the popish worship?

Is *your* conscience to be governed by nicer rules than those of *Christ* and his *Apostles*, who paid, and ENJOINED payment of taxes, not only to maintain the then *corrupt* Church of the Jews, but to those very *heathen* governments by which *idolatrous* worship was supported? Alas, for those tender and raw consciences! We should commiserate the torments of their sensitive owners, did we not at once perceive that in them, as in the productions of nature, there is that principle which naturalists call compensatory, which makes up for the defect of one faculty, by an increased power in another. So, we often see these dreadfully delicate consciences become vastly accommodating, like the gullets of the Pharisees of old, which would strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. While they shrink and shudder, like cats skinned alive for profit, at the slightest contact with the *parent Church of the Reformation*, they can hug the *papist* and the in-

"The Owens, the Howes, the Baxters, and their descendants, till the nineteenth century, could contemplate the existence of this law, free from all the throes and convulsions of conscience which torment the modern dissenter."—*Correspondent of the British Magazine*, for December, 1835.

*fidet*, as comfortably as though they were clad in the hide of a rhinoceros, or the shell of a tortoise. Commend me, I pray you, Saint Hume, Saint Duncombe, Saint Wakley, ye elect of *scrupulous* dissent, ye, canonized of O'Connell, and the Pope, patron saints of the association of super-sensitive consciences—commend me to a comfortable queasy conscience. It is a cloak one can hardly walk without in these fretful times.

It is really difficult to imagine this plea to be gravely brought forward, or to treat it seriously; but let me not be supposed to assert, that *among* all those who use the plea of conscience, there are not *many* who honestly entertain scruples. It is not to *them*, but to those who use it as a *stalking horse*, that I apply the above observations<sup>1</sup>. Yet, I must maintain that these scruples, however sincere, are wholly *fantastical*, and cannot be sustained on either scriptural or rational grounds. That the State, under which you live, should pay towards a *Christian Church*, and still more, that this Church should receive that, which it holds by the *most ancient and sa-*

<sup>1</sup> The following statement from the Rev. Mr. Pickering above quoted, will show how much *conscience* there is in the end, when we see how much there is in the *means* used to attain it.

“As the foregoing letter contains sentiments quite at variance with the political lecture lately delivered in a neighbouring chapel, which many of my congregation heard, I may be taxed with inconsistency by some, for being present at that lecture, or in any way giving my sanction to it. In this case, I have to complain of *gross unfairness*, in the lecturer being announced, by hand-bills, to preach a sermon on behalf of a *charitable* object, thereby inducing me to publish the same, and give up my stated religious services for that evening, to afford myself and friends an opportunity to hear him, and give to the charity. Under this *imposition* I also engaged in the service connected with the lecture, supposing we were assembled to worship God; and thereby became an involuntary partaker in ‘other men’s sins.’ But had I known (as in justice, I and the public ought to have known) the design of the lecturer, I should have conscientiously avoided such implication, and left those *kindred raving spirits* to feast upon the lecture, to whom it was most congenial; ‘who are always night and day in mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting themselves, &c.’

“I am not naturally quarrelsome, it is well known; yet no fear of offending can make me shrink from duty. “J. P.”

*red tale of property known to this land*, can surely never be a grievance to a *conscience* which takes its rule from the Gospel of Christ, or even from those principles of common sense and justice, by which society must be regulated.

IV. The last plea is, that it was, many centuries ago, the practice of this country to apportion the tithes in a four-fold division, of which one-fourth was applied to the repairs of the Church. I cannot, from the nature of this letter, and those to whom it is addressed, enter at large into the arguments by which the Rev. Hale Hales exploded this assertion, and showed the unfair use that was made of it. I shall be brief—but to the point.

I defy the Association to prove, *by any evidence*, that the practice in question *was ever generally adopted in this country*. The Romish decree of Gelasius upon this subject was directed to *the Romish Church* LONG BEFORE THE BRITISH CHURCH ACKNOWLEDGED THE AUTHORITY OF THAT CHURCH.

If the practice was even ever *partially* adopted here, it must have been when the Bishop and his Clergy lived together in a collegiate form, as in Cathedral precincts, and at a period *before the date of legal memory*, from which a common law title of unimpeachable validity would arise. This, Blackstone, who is of opinion that such a practice prevailed at some remote but unknown period, clearly recognizes, and speaks of the circumstance as a question of *history*, and not as one which would, in the mind of any lawyer, or reasonable man, have the slightest connection with the present rights of the Church.

When I look at the nonsense advanced on this point, and the air of antiquarian learning, the scrupulous reverence for ancient customs, and the nice desire of interpreting the law *against* the Church, by old papal decrees and Anglo-Saxon canons, I begin to fancy I have got back to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* again. How should we

admire this new-born radical reverence of antiquity! Our ears yet tingle with the sound of the cackle which proclaimed everywhere that *history is an old almanac*; old charters are *only parchment and wax*. But what a delightful and convenient new light has broken in! Church law must *now* be reverently interpreted only by the dim light of old customs, and seen through the politico-religious spectacles of the new deity of radical justice<sup>1</sup>. Methinks I see the venerable beldame at work upon her new system. She has exchanged the sword for a bludgeon—the scales for a sponge. She disdains the bandage. She will look, she says, at least on *one* side before she decides. One eye she has put out, for economy, deeming it superfluous to maintain two, in these enlightened days. The other has a most marvellously useful squint. Even now, while she is grubbing for a Romish authority to withdraw from the Church a support, on the plea that she had it not some thirteen hundred or fourteen hundred years ago, the venerable and equitable old lady contrives to squint over the intermediate space. She cannot see that, according to her rule of restoration to old customs, there is one *close under her nose*, in which honest zeal may be easily gratified, without going quite so far, and into grounds quite so uncertain—I mean the property plundered from the Church, by certain great families at the time of the reformation; *let that be restored* first; and then talk about putting things on their ancient footing.

But I have done. I have, perhaps, bestowed too much on these miserable puppets of arguments, which are dressed up and paraded under the titles of justice, civil and religious rights, conscience, and reverence for

<sup>1</sup> A remarkable specimen of this scrupulous justice occurs in the same parties, scouting the unquestionable *authority* of the Levitical code in favour of tithes, and yet endeavouring to *distort* its meaning into an *authority* for the voluntary system, and for resisting Church rates.

law and ancient custom—but which are neither more nor less than the stalking-horse of anti-protestant, infidel, and revolutionary, factions.

If any man, after reading these observations—if any religious dissenter—especially if ANY CHURCHMAN, can believe he is doing his duty as a *Christian*, in joining such a league, I have only one request to make to him, which is, that before he acts, he will fall down, privately, on his knees, and *pray God's Holy Spirit, through Christ, to direct him aright*; and then, remembering whose eye beholds him, and before whose judgment-seat he must again have the question put—ask himself—AM I PROMOTING THY GLORY, O GOD?—AM I, O SAVIOUR! SEEKING THE SALVATION OF THY BRETHREN?—AM I AIDING TO INCREASE THE KNOWLEDGE OF THY GOSPEL?—AM I, IN A WORD, ACTUATED BY CHRISTIAN MOTIVES, IN ENDEAVOURING TO INDUCE THE LEGISLATURE OF MY COUNTRY TO ROB THE MINISTRY, AND THE BUILDINGS OF THE NATIONAL CHURCH, OF A RENT-CHARGE APPROPRIATED TO THEM BY COMMON LAW, AND BY A TITLE SO ANCIENT THAT “MEMORY OF MAN RUNNETH NOT TO THE CONTRARY?”

I. E. N. MOLESWORTH.

Nov. 29. 1836.

P. S.—DEC. 2d.—The following facts, relating to the *ancient* law of repairing Churches, are from an excellent letter in the *British Magazine*, for this month:—

“In 693, Ina, King of the West Saxons, enacted payment of *Church scot* by *assessment*.—In 926, Athelstan, and his Parliament, granted the *tithe* of the whole kingdom to the clergy; and, by a separate decree, ordered payment of *Church scot*.—Edmund and Edgar both distinguish and confirm *tithe* and *Church scot*.—Canute also confirms the statutes of Edgar, and *declares that, independent of tithes, all people are bound, by right, to assist in repairing the Churches.*”

## POSTSCRIPT TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

By some unimportant omissions, and alterations, I am enabled to introduce a few land-marks against the artifices of those who would mystify where they cannot answer, by shurring over what I do maintain, and imputing to me arguments and statements that I *do not* maintain. The principal positions I maintain are—

I. Church-rates are not a new tax upon *dissenters* in particular—not a tax on *persons*—not a tax at all, but a rent charge, older by centuries than the title to the *property* on which it is charged.

II. If it *were* a tax it would be one which a *Christian* state should consider indispensable to its polity; and which is not to be resisted, because certain individuals do not choose to avail themselves of the means of national worship maintained by it.

III. The plea of conscience is either a *stalking-horse*, or a *delusion*: the former used by artful managers to obtain by the latter the support of honest, but mistaken, friends of religion. Jesus and his Apostles were not troubled with such a conscience; and the old dissenters, such as Howe and Baxter, though *eminently pious, learned, and conscientious*, never dreamed of such a grievance.

IV. I do not charge every member of the Association with being a revolutionist, an infidel, or a papist; but if they be *Protestant dissenters*, and still more if *professed churchmen*, I charge them with inconsistency in *joining* such a legion to assail the *parent Church of the Reformation* in England. I ask them whether they are thus serving religion or its *enemies*? I distinguish the *religious* from the *political* and *fictitious* dissenter.

Let it be remembered, too, that the plea of *conscience* is used, not only for exempting the dissenter from *direct* payment, but for *dictating* to the legislature that there shall be *no commutation* out of the public revenue.

An attempt is made to persuade us that, under the Jewish dispensation, the tabernacle was maintained only by voluntary offerings. Just remember that *some* things may have been voluntary, but a *great many* compulsory; and that a piece of money was by law exacted *from every person*, to provide for the service of the tabernacle. Remember, also, that this is a mere manœuvre to get up a controversy of words on a point that would *not alter the case*, if it could be made out. If they could show (which they cannot), that the temple was kept up by voluntary gifts, it would prove that, according to that code, voluntary gifts were *lawful*; but not that the keeping up Christian Churches by the national revenue is *unlawful*. Nor would it be a reasonable ground for making the resistance to the tribute of the nation a duty and matter of *conscience*.

One more point has been brought under my attention lately. Some persons have, I suppose, deceived themselves (for no sane man could so

speculate upon the credulity of others) into the belief, that if church-rates were abolished, the dissenters are anxious to give ten-fold the amount in *voluntary gifts*! Good, simple souls! they would send us back to our nurseries, to rehearse the story of Little Red Riding Hood, with the CHURCH ASSOCIATION performing the part of the WOLF.

CHURCH.—“Who’s there?”

WOLF.—“Your loving grandchild! I have brought you the dissenters’ offering of *voluntary support*.”

CHURCH.—“Pull the bobbin, my dear, and the latch will go up!”

WHO DOES NOT KNOW THE REST?

### NOTE TO THE FIFTH EDITION.

As the demand for this Tract has occasionally outstripped the supply, a duplicate has been set up in London, to prevent disappointment.

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A

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